

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.312
U.S. APPLN. NO. 09/889,881

REMARKS

It is requested that the above amendments be entered.

With reference to MPEP §714.16, no "additional search is required", **only** "a cursory review of the record is necessary", and the above amendments would "not involve materially added work on the part of the Office, e.g., checking excessive editorial changes in the specification or claims".

The amendments are needed to correct an obvious formatting error in the table on page 7, to conform the language of the Abstract to that of the written description and claims, and to correct the dependencies of the claims. The amended claims are patentable because they are dependent on an allowable claim (claim 1). The amendments were not earlier presented because these errors were not detected by the inventors until after the mailing of the Notice of Allowance.

More specifically, the verb "pelleting" has been corrected to read "pelletizing" to conform the language of the Abstract to that found in the written description and drawing (see "Pelletizing" in blocks 6 in Figs. 1 and 2, and the consistent use of "pelletizing" in the written description and claims).

The amendment to the table on page 7 of the specification merely deletes an extraneous extension of a row line in the column headed "% scrap", thereby avoiding any possible confusion in the interpretation of the table. For the Examiner's convenience, there is enclosed a copy of page 7 in which the extraneous line to be deleted is hatched to indicate a deletion.

Claims 5, 6 and 7 have been amended merely to make them dependent on the **allowed** independent claim 1. The Examiner will note that, prior to the Preliminary Amendment, each of

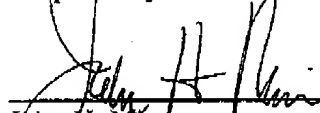
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claims 5, 6 and 7 was dependent on "any one of claims 1 to 3". Claim 5 also has been slightly amended to change "third set" to --further set--, to avoid any possible objection to the use of the modifier "third" (because its parent claim 1 refers only to a "first" set).

It is believed that the above amendments are in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.312 and with MPEP §714.16; however, if for any reason the Examiner feels that these amendments are not enterable, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner **call the undersigned attorney** to discuss the matter.

I hereby certify that this paper is being facsimile transmitted to the Patent and Trademark Office on April 16, 2004.

Respectfully submitted,



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23373

CUSTOMER NUMBER

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- 7 -

The main types of scrap encountered in the art are summarized below, by way of example.

<i>Form</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Characteristics before treatment</i>	<i>% scrap (in mass of PuO₂)</i>
<i>Powders</i>	End of pellet-pelletizing batch	Unsintered powder with uncontrolled particle size distribution and sinterability	99.5%
	Grinding powders	Sintered powder with uncontrolled particle size distribution and sinterability	
	Recovery of dust	Uncontrolled PuO ₂ and impurity content and particle size distribution	
<i>Pellets</i>	Rejects from sorting by aspect	Sintered pellets	///
	Samples		
	Excess production		
<i>Various</i>	Chemical analyses	Nitric solutions	0.5%
	Maintenance and cleaning of production equipment and/or gloveboxes	Volatile chemical impurities	
		Nonvolatile chemical impurities	

5

The steps of crushing (step 22) (optional) and of micronization (step 23) the pellets can be turned to advantage also for recycling scrapped pellets, for example on sorting (step 9), and for increasing the size of the batches of scrap powder homogenized and characterized before recycling.

10

It must be understood that the present invention is in no way limited to the embodiments described above and that many modifications may be carried out thereon without departing from the scope of the claims given below.

- 15 For laboratory nitric solutions, it is possible to use precipitation and calcination before dry recycling as for the scrap mentioned above.

For scrap which exceptionally has excess nonvolatile chemical impurities, it is possible to use, for example, chemical pretreatment in an aqueous phase.